

The Arms Trade Treaty and the Sustainable Development Goals

Armed violence, often fuelled by the irresponsible and poorly regulated trade in arms and ammunition, has a disastrous impact on development efforts around the world. Hospitals and schools are destroyed, livelihoods left in tatters, and vital resources diverted to fuelling yet more violence at the expense of sustainable development.

The newly agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set a long-term agenda that seeks to tackle global problems like poverty, hunger, equality, and peace and security. Many of the targets set to achieve these goals depend on a reduction of armed violence and insecurity, and cannot be fully achieved without robust and transparent national arms control systems, underpinning the responsible trade in conventional weapons.



Implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and its universalization complement the aims of the SDGs and provide states with an effective tool to bring about the reduction of armed violence and human suffering. Given this shared vision, there are many areas where the actions to implement the ATT will inform and improve efforts to achieve the SDGs, and vice versa. This briefing paper outlines some of the key thematic areas where practical linkages exist between the ATT and the SDGs.

Strengthening arms control and tackling diversion

Goal 16 calls for UN member states and all actors to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”

All of Goal 16 is relevant to the ATT, and several of its targets will be advanced through practical measures to implement the ATT’s obligations. **Target 16.1** for example (Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere) corresponds directly to the ATT’s stated goal, to reduce human suffering. A regulated and responsible trade in arms will be critical if states are to make meaningful progress towards this target.

SDG Target	ATT Links	Related ATT Implementation Efforts
Target 16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime.	Article 1 Object of ATT: to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms and prevent their diversion; Article 5 Establish and maintain a national control system; Article 11 Establishment of measures to combat diversion.	The design, implementation and support of control systems that uphold and strengthen ATT requirements and objectives will reduce illicit arms flows.

Another obvious point of overlap between the ATT and SDGs is **Target 16.4** (Reduction of illicit arms flows and combat all forms of organized crime). The ATT is one of the key international instruments relevant to Target 16.4. Many of the ATT's obligations are relevant to Target 16.4, as they outline a range of practical measures that would improve the regulation and national controls over the trade in conventional arms and ammunition, helping to prevent their leakage into the illicit market. These include: establishing a national control system (Article 5), developing export and import controls (Articles 6-8), regulating transit or trans-shipment (Article 9) and brokering (Article 10), and maintaining national records (Article 12).

Diversion is often the critical link between the authorised and illicit trade in arms. Article 11 of the ATT directly addresses the complex issue of diversion, and lays out obligations for all states across the transfer supply chain. Article 11.2, for example, requires all parties to a potential sale to consider "... the establishment of mitigation measures such as confidence-building measures or jointly developed and agreed programmes by the exporting and importing State." The exporting State is also expected to implement prevention measures, which might include denying the transfer.



States Parties to the ATT should:

- Implement all ATT obligations to develop strong national control systems that apply to the broadest range of conventional arms
- Embed strategies to address the risk of diversion throughout the transfer decision-making process (i.e. risk assessment, mitigation measures, post-transfer verification, etc.)

Reducing gender-based violence (GBV)

SDG Target	ATT Links	Related ATT Implementation Efforts
Target 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.	Article 7.4 Prior to an arms transfer, exporting states must consider the risk of serious acts of gender-based violence or violence against women and children.	Development of methods to consider the risk of gender-based violence in connection with export authorization can lower the incidence of armed violence based on gender.

The ATT is the first legally-binding global instrument to meaningfully connect arms transfers to GBV, and is therefore critical in the context of the many references in the SDGs to gender sensitivity, gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the protection of children. Perhaps most obvious among these is SDG Target 5.2, which seeks to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.



(GBV), as required by Article 7.4.

The inclusion of GBV as part of a comprehensive risk assessment is an innovative aspect of the ATT. Article 7.4 of the ATT requires states to 'take into account the risk of the conventional arms covered under Article 2(1) or of the items covered under Article 3 or Article 4 being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children'.

States Parties to the ATT should change or update their national risk-assessment methodologies to comprehensively assess for the risk of arms to be used to commit or facilitate **violence against women, or gender based violence**

In doing so, States Parties will not only be meeting their legal obligations under the ATT, they will also be able to contribute toward the attainment of Target 5.2 to eliminate violence against women and girls.

ATT States Parties should:

- Develop methodologies to consider the risk of gender-based violence as part of a comprehensive risk assessment under Article 7.4.

Increasing Transparency

SDG Target	ATT Links	Related ATT Implementation Efforts
Target 17.4 Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress.	Article 13 Comprehensive, transparent, public reporting	Development of processes for clear and accurate reporting on costs of arms imports will assist effective expenditure assessment in accordance with sustainable development goals.
Target 16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.	Article 13 Comprehensive, transparent, public reporting	Development of transparent procurement processes for ATT reporting will have a positive impact on combatting corruption and bribery.

Transparency is at the core of both the ATT and the SDGs. Improving transparency in the international arms trade is one of the ATT’s primary purposes, and the importance of information sharing among States Parties is stressed throughout the Treaty. In Article 11 (Diversion) for example, all States Parties involved across the transfer chain are required to “cooperate and exchange information [...] in order to mitigate the risk of diversion,” while Article 15 (International Assistance) encourages all States Parties “to exchange experience and information on lessons learned in relation to any aspect of this Treaty.”

Several of the SDGs include targets that relate to ensuring greater transparency in budgeting and spending for sustainable development. As part of Goal 16, for example, **Target 16.5** calls for substantial reductions in corruption and bribery in all their forms. Relatedly, within Goal 17, which is focused on developing better partnerships to achieve the SDGs, **Target 17.4** calls for coordinated policies to help reduce the debt of developing countries.



Article 13 (Reporting) contains the most relevant obligations in this regard. If States Parties submit public and comprehensive reports as required by Article 13, not only will the implementation of the ATT become more effective, there will also be a number of positive repercussions on the achievement of the SDGs.

Increased public reporting will reduce opportunities for arms transfers to be negatively affected by corruption and bribery. Arms deals tend to be surrounded by high levels of commercial and national security secrecy. This makes the trade particularly susceptible to the risk of corruption and diversion. Transparency International argues that arms transfers are particularly susceptible to corruption, and estimates some \$20 billion is lost each year to corruption in defence and security deals – money that

is urgently needed to meet the targets and challenges posed by the SDGs and a practice that serves to undermine good governance more generally.

Also clear and accurate reporting on costs of arms imports will improve the capacity of national policy-makers to control national spending. This in turn will contribute to better use of key planning processes like Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks (MTEF) – and support efforts to bring military expenditure and budgeting under the control of the national budgetary process.

States Parties to the ATT should:

- Submit their ATT initial and annual reports publicly,
- Ensure that these reports contain accurate and comprehensive financial information.

Safeguarding cities

SDG Goal	ATT Links	Related ATT Implementation Efforts
SDG Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	<p>Article 1 Object of ATT: to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms and prevent their diversion</p> <p>Article 5 Establish and maintain a national control system</p> <p>Article 6 & 7 Prohibitions and risk assessment criteria</p> <p>Article 11 Establishment of measures to combat diversion.</p>	More robust arms transfer controls will reduce diversion of arms to unauthorized end-users. Fewer diverted shipments, specifically of SALW, will help lower levels of urban violence and increase safety and development efforts in cities.

Cities around the world suffer from the proliferation particularly of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. Increasing urbanisation and related inequality can be drivers of armed violence that are fuelled by the illicit or irresponsible trade in arms. States Parties to the ATT should include the risk of urban violence as part of a rigorous transfer assessment, and by developing more robust arms transfer controls, will reduce the risk of arms reaching the hand of unauthorized end-users, for example organised crime.

Investment in security sector reform, such as training, community policing, physical security and stockpile management, will improve states' capacities to meet their ATT commitments and provide peaceful and secure urban environments for their citizens. This will all have a positive impact on SDG 11's goal of reducing **urban violence**. Most of these activities are already recognised by the OECD-DAC to be development-assistance eligible. In 2015 alone, DAC-donors spent over \$680 million in SSR-related activities.

ATT States Parties should:

- Invest in security sector reform activities such as stockpile management
- Implement all ATT obligations to develop strong national control systems that apply to the broadest range of conventional arms

